



BY JAS. CLARK.

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SPEECH OF THADDEUS STEVENS, OF PENNSYLVANIA.

In the U. S. House of Representatives, on the 20th of February, 1850, in Committee of the Whole on the State of the Union, on the reference of the President's Annual Message.

Mr. Stevens, of Pennsylvania, said: Mr. Chairman: I do not know that I should have troubled the committee at this time, could I see any reasonable prospect that the House would devote its time to practical legislation. But for a considerable time after our meeting, the organization of the House was obstructed, and since organized, a large portion of its time has been occupied by speeches on the subject of Slavery, mostly by Southern gentlemen, when no practical question, to which they could apply, was before the committee. There was no doubt a well-defined object in this, partly to intimidate Congress, and partly to occupy its time so that no legislation could be matured...

Here, then, we have a well defined and palpable conspiracy of Southern members combined to stop the supplies necessary to the existence of the Government, disorganize and dissolve it, until the bands that bind the Union together are severed, and as a gentleman early in the session desired, "discord reigns." Well might the gentleman anticipate that the same hostility and hostility would be directed against the nation. Sir, I doubt if there is another legislative body in the world where such a sedition would not be followed by prosecution and punishment. France has lately expelled members of her Assembly for a similar offence. But in this glorious country, where nearly two-thirds of the people are free, we can say anything within these walls or beyond them with impunity, unless it be to agitate in favor of human liberty—that is aggressive...

Let us inquire, what is the grave offence, the mighty wrong, which can justify a threat big with such portentous consequences?—The refusal of Congress to propagate or to establish a doubtful or even an admitted good in the Territories would surely be no cause of rebellion and revolution—much less would the refusal to extend an evil, an admitted evil, an unmitigated wrong. Will an impartial country and posterity believe it when impartial history records that the only cause for this high threat was the apprehension that the Congress of this Free Republic would not propagate, nor permit to be propagated, the institution of human slavery into her vast Territories now free? Yet such is the simple fact. It is proper then, to inquire whether the thing sought to be forced upon the Territories at the risk of treason and rebellion, be a good or an evil. I think it is a great evil which ought to be interdicted; that we should oppose it as statesmen, as philanthropists, and as moralists, notwithstanding the extraordinary position taken by the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. Hilliard) to the contrary.

While I thus announce my unchangeable hostility to slavery in every form, and in every place, I also avow my determination to stand by all the compromises of the Constitution, and carry them into faithful effect. Some of those compromises I greatly dislike; and were they open for consideration, they should receive my assent. But I find them in a constitution formed in difficult times, and I would not disturb them.

By those compromises Congress has no power over Slavery in the States. I greatly regret that it is so; for if it were within our legitimate control, I would go, regardless of all threats, for some just, safe and certain means for its final extinction. But I know of those who claim the right, or have the right, to hold it within the States. Yet when we come to form governments for territories acquired long since the formation of the Constitution, admit new States, whose only claim for admission depends on the will of Congress, we are bound to discharge that duty as shall best contribute to the prosperity, the power, the permanency, and the glory of this nation. Does slavery contribute to either of these? Is it not rather subversive of them all? Let us first view it in the low light of political economy.

That nation, I suppose, is always the most prosperous, all other things being equal, that has the most industries, and the largest number of the producing classes. Those who merely consume the fruits of the earth, add nothing to the strength or wealth of a nation. Slave countries never can have a large number of industrious freemen. Slave-holders form an untold aristocracy, whose numerous dependents. Individuals appropriate large tracts of territories to themselves, and thus prevent it from being thickly settled by freemen. Their laborers having no ambition to gratify, no love of gain to stimulate them, no parental feelings to impel them to action, are idle and wasteful. When the lash is the only stimulant, the spirit of man revolts from labor.

ence under their own vine and fig tree. There is no sound connecting link between the aristocrat and slave. True, there is a class of human beings between them, but they are the most worthless and miserable of mankind. The poor white laborer is the scorn of a slave himself. For there labor always degrades the laborer. The white people who work with their hands are ranked with the other members of the society of the rich. Their associates, if anywhere, are with the colored population.—They feel that they are degraded and despised; and their minds and conduct generally conform to their condition.

The soil occupied by slavery is much less productive than a similar soil occupied by freemen. Men who are to receive none of the wages of their labor do not care to multiply its fruits. Sloth, negligence, improvidence, are the consequences. The land being neglected, becomes poor and barren; as it becomes exhausted, it is thrown out as waste, for slave labor never renovates its strength. This applies particularly to agricultural States. Take Virginia, the favorite example for the South, which has been so triumphantly referred to by the gentleman from North Carolina, (Mr. Clingman).—When he drew his facts that she was more prosperous, more populous and richer than the free States, I know not. I am sure it was not from personal observation, for he would not certify on his imagination in matters of fact. I suppose he must have been misled by the most miserable of sophists and most false of chroniclers, Ellwood Fisher.

I admit that, by nature, Virginia has capabilities equal, if not superior, to any State in the Union. She has a delightful climate; a naturally fertile soil. She is intersected, as was said by the gentleman from Virginia, (Mr. Bayly), by the noblest rivers. Her hills and mountains are filled with the rich minerals and coverments of valuable timber. She has the finest water, I believe, in the nation, in the very heart of her State; and her harbors are amongst the best in the world. At the time of the adoption of the Constitution she was the most powerful State—her population was double that of New York. It was the boast of her statesmen that she was *prima inter pares*. What is she now? The population of New York is more than double—I think the next census will show nearly triple hers. Her lands cultivated by unwilling hands is unproductive. Travel through the adjoining States of Ohio and Pennsylvania, and you will see that the land produces more than double as much as the same kind of land in Virginia. In the free States new towns are every where springing up and thriving; smiling habitations are within hail of each other; the whole country is dotted with school-houses and churches almost within sight of each other; and, except under peculiar circumstances, their manufactures and mechanic arts furnish lucrative employment to all their people; and their population is steadily and rapidly increasing. Turn again to Virginia. There is scarcely a new town, except at one or two points, within her whole borders. Her ancient villages wear the appearance of mournful decay. Her minerals and timber are unworked. Her noble water is but partially occupied. Her fine harbors are without ships, except from the poor; and her seaports, towns and waters are deserted, and I will abide the answer.

It is essential to the existence of republics that education should be generally diffused among the people. Slavery prevents this.—Rich men employ private tutors, or send their children abroad. But the children of the people generally cannot be educated without the instrumentality of district schools. In slave States, where the plantations are large, the white population is too sparse to maintain them. Besides there is another fatal obstacle to them in the aversion of the rich to associate with the poor. The poor white laborer's children could never be permitted to mingle in the same schools and sit upon the same benches with the rich man's sons. That would be offensive.

Slavery enfeebles a nation in war as well as in peace. It is impossible that a nation of masters and slaves can be as powerful and formidable in the field of offensive or defensive war as a nation of freemen. A large portion of the population must remain at home to prevent the rebellion of those who are constantly in a state of latent rebellion with their oppressors. I know, sir, we have had a most alarming description of the prowess of the south. We have heard their cannon roar: seen their bayonets bristle; heard the war-cry of the charging cavalry, and seen their bowie knives gleam within this hall, in the very picture of the gentleman from North Carolina, (Mr. Clingman). We have often been modestly reminded of the blood and treasure, and the gallantry of the South? This I do not dispute. I am proud to admit that she has furnished many gallant sons, whose names will adorn the brightest pages of our history, both for the war of the revolution, the war of 1812, and the war which we lately assumed as the ally of Texas and of slavery. I give her full credit for her patriotism and heroism. But the south has always furnished officers for our army; Presidents for the Republic; most of our foreign ambassadors; heads of departments: chiefs of bureaus; and sometimes, in her proud humility, has consented that the younger sons of her dilapidated houses should monopolize the places of clerks and messengers to the government. But when are drawn the common soldiery, the men who peril their lives, and win victories for your glory? Almost none from the free States, except in cases of sudden emergency, when volunteers are called nearest the seat of danger. The present Secretary of War, a southern gentleman of great ability, and strenuous for Southern rights, says in his Report:

"According to the practice which has long prevailed, the great majority of enlistments is made in the northern Atlantic cities and the adjacent interior towns, whence the recruits are sent to the general depot for instruction, and finally distributed to the southern and western posts, according to the wants of the service."

tern climates to fight the frontier battles, and whiten your fields with their bones. I am opposed to the diffusion of Slavery, because confining it within its present limits will bring the States themselves to its gradual abolition. Let this disease spread, and although it will render the whole body leprous and loathsome, yet it will long survive. Confine it, and like the cancer that is tending toward the heart it must be eradicated or it will eat out the vitals. The sooner the patient is convinced of this, the sooner he will procure the healing operation.

The learned and able gentleman from Virginia, (Mr. MEADE,) in a pamphlet which he laid upon our table takes the same view of it. He says, "Virginia has a slave population of near half a million, whose value is chiefly dependent on southern demand." Let us pause a moment over this humiliating confession. In plain English, what does it mean? That Virginia is now only fit to be the breeder, not the employer of slaves. That she is reduced to the condition that her proud cavalry are compelled to turn slave-traders for a livelihood! Instead of attempting to renovate the soil, and by their own honest labor compelling the earth to yield her abundance; instead of seeking for the best breed of cattle and horses to feed on her hills and valleys, and fertilize the land, the sons of that great State must devote their time to selecting and grooming the most lusty sires and the most fruitful wenches, to supply the slave baracoon of the South! And the learned gentleman pathetically laments that the profits of this genteel traffic will be greatly lessened by the circumscision of slavery! This is his picture, not mine.

The same gentleman says in the same speech, "If we intend to submit to the policy of confining the slaves within their present limits, we should commence forthwith the work of gradual emancipation; it is an easier task for us than for our children." The eloquent gentleman from Alabama, (Mr. HILLIARD,) is of the same opinion. He said: "We must make up our minds either to resist the interdiction of the progress of slavery, or to submit to an organic change in our institutions."—Yes sir, this admitted result, is to my mind, one of the most agreeable consequences of the legitimate restriction of slavery. Confine this malady within its present limits. Surround it by a cordon of freemen, so that it cannot spread, and in less than twenty-five years every slave-holding state in this Union will have on its statute books a law for the gradual and final extinction of slavery. Then will have been consummated the fondest wishes of every patriot's heart. Then will our fair country be glorious indeed; and be to posterity a bright example of the true principles of government—of universal freedom.

I am opposed to the extension of slavery into territories now free, for still graver reasons—because I am opposed to despotism throughout the world. I admit that this government cannot preach a crusade of liberty into other States and nations, much as she abhors tyrants and tyranny. Then she can only mourn over the existence of wrong.—But when the question of government is within her own control, and she permits despotism to exist, and aids its diffusion, she is responsible for it in the face of the civilized world, and before the God of Liberty. In my judgment, not only the slave States, but the General Government, recognizing and aiding as it does slavery, is a despotism. I do not use the word in a declamatory, but strictly legal signification. That government is despotic where the rulers govern subjects by their own mere will—by decrees and laws emanating from their uncontrolled will, in the enactment and execution of which the ruled have no voice and under which they have no right except at the will of the rulers.—Despotism does not depend upon the number of the rulers, or the number of the subjects. It may have one ruler, or many. Rome was a despotism under Nero; so she was under the triumvirate. Athens was a despotism under her Thirty Tyrants; under her Four Hundred Tyrants; under her Three Thousand Tyrants. It has been generally observed that despotism increases in severity with the number of despots; the responsibility is more divided, and the claims more numerous; the triumvirs each demanded his victims. The smaller the number of subjects in proportion to the tyrants the more cruel the oppression, because the less danger from rebellion.—In this government, the free white citizens are the rulers—the sovereigns, as we delight to be called. All others are subjects. There are, perhaps, some sixteen or seventeen millions of sovereigns and four millions of subjects.

The rulers and the ruled are of all colors, from the clear white of the Caucasian tribes to the swarthy Ethiopian. The former, by courtesy, are all called white, the latter black. In this government the subject has no rights, social, political or personal. He has no voice in the laws which govern him. He can hold no property. His very wife and children are not his. His labor is another's. He, and all that appertain to him, are the absolute property of his rulers. He is governed, bought, sold, punished, executed, by laws to which he never gave his assent, and by rulers whom he never chose. He is not a serf

merely, with half the rights of men like the subjects of despotic Russia; but a naked slave stripped of every right which God and nature gave, and which the high spirit of our revolution declared inalienable—which he himself could not surrender, and which man could not take from him. Is he not then the subject of despotic sway?

The slaves of Athens and of Rome were free in comparison. They had some rights—could acquire some property, could choose their own masters, and purchase their own freedom; and when free could rise in social and political life. The slaves of America then lie under the most absolute and grinding despotism that the world ever saw. But, who are the despots? The rulers of the country—the sovereign people!—Not merely the slave-holder who cracks the lash. He is but the instrument in the hands of despotism. That despotism is the government of the slave States; and the United States, consisting of all its rulers—all the free citizens. Do not look upon this as a paradox, because you and I, and the sixteen millions of rulers are free. The rulers of every despotism are free. Nicholas, of Russia, is free. The grand Sultan of Turkey is free. The butcher of Austria is free. Augustus, Antony and Lepidus, were free while they drenched Rome in blood. The Thirty Tyrants; the Four Hundred; the Three Thousand were free while they bound their countrymen in chains. You, and I, and the sixteen millions, are free, while we fasten iron chains, and rivet manacles on four millions of our fellow men; tear their wives and children from them; separate them; sell them, and doom them to perpetual, eternal bondage. Are we not then despots—despots such as history will brand and God abhors?

But we are told that it is none of our business. That Southern slavery is a matter between the slaveholder and their own consciences. I trust it may be so decided by impartial history, and the unerring Judge, that we may not be branded with the great stigma, and that a grievous burden may not weigh upon our souls. But could we hope for that justification, if now, when we have the power to prevent it, we should permit this evil to spread over thousands of square leagues now free, and settle upon unborn millions? Sir, for myself, I should look upon any Northern man, enlightened by a Northern education, who would directly or indirectly, by omission or commission, by basely voting or cowardly skulking, permit it to spread over one rood of God's free earth, as a traitor to liberty and recreant to his God!

Slavery tends to make the people among whom it is planted arrogant, insolent, intolerant and tyrannical towards the freemen of other parts of the Union. The honorable member from Virginia, from whom I have already quoted, (Mr. MEADE,) says speaking of slavery, "Our past history testifies to the fact that it elevates the character of the white man.—Though we have been in a numerical minority in the Union for fifty years, yet during the greater part of that period we have managed to control the destinies of the Union. Whether on the battle field or in the council, the sons of the South have taken the lead; and the records of the nation afforded ample testimony of their superior energy and skill!" Sir, I do not complain of this statement. The former part of it is both candid and true. But I cannot listen to the recital without feeling the burning blush on my countenance, that the North with her overshadowing millions of freemen, has, for half a century, been tame and servile enough to submit to this arrogant rule.

The South imprisons Northern freemen when found within her borders, if they happen to be guilty of a dark skin, and carry it "between the wind and their nobility." And when a Northern State sends a learned and venerable agent to test the legality of such imprisonment before their own tribunals, he is driven with violence and indignity from their shores. Massachusetts has suffered, and I trust, remembers the insult.

How often have these walls been profaned and the North insulted by the insolent threat, that if Congress legislate against Southern will, it should be disregarded, resisted to extremity, and the Union destroyed. During the present session we have been more than once told, amidst raving excitement, that if we dared to legislate in a certain way, the South would teach the North a lesson! that their minds were made up to extreme resistance! Is this the place to use threats instead of arguments?—Are the representatives of freemen to be thus treated? True, you are not wholly without justification in the belief that it will be effectual. You have too often intimidated Congress. You have more than once frightened the tame North from its propriety, and found "dough-faces" enough to be your tools.

And when you lacked a given number, I take no pride in saying, you were sure to find them in old Pennsylvania, who, in former years has ranked a portion of her delegation among your most submissive slaves. But I hope, with some fears, that the race of dough-faces is extinct. I do not see how it could be otherwise. They were an unmanly, an unvirile race, incapable according to the laws of nature of reproduction. I hope they have left no descendants. The old ones are deep in political graves. For them I am sure there is no resurrection, for they were soulless. Now, when the whole civilized world unite in denouncing slavery as a curse, a shame and a crime, I trust that when the great battle between liberty and slavery comes to be fought on this floor, there will be none found hiding among the stuff, no fraudulent concealments, not one accursed Achan in this whole camp of the representatives of freemen.

The eloquent gentleman from Virginia, (Mr. SADDON,) the other day, in his beautiful peroration, personated the great States of Virginia, Kentucky and Louisiana, and in their name apostrophized the good, and I will add the great man who now occupies the executive chair; and besought him as he loved the place of his birth, the place of his nurture, and the place of his residence, not to forsake his Southern brethren in this emergency, but to stand by them in the defence of human bondage. How much more effective, enduring and hallowed would that eloquence have been, had the orator's lips been touched with a coal from the Altar of Freedom!

Then could he have gone with friendly anxiety to that noble benevolent and heroic man, and admonished him, that although he had gathered all the earthly laurels that can be reaped by the sickle of death, yet if he would have his name descend to posterity with increasing lustre, he must by one great, just and patriotic example, wipe out the only spot that obscures the sun of his glory. He might with propriety have taken with him the learned gentleman from Alabama, (Mr. HILLIARD,) an together they might have pointed to that solemn hour, which to him, and to all of us that are treading the down hill of life, must soon arrive, when the visions of ambition and of earthly wealth shall have passed from before his eyes, and left him nothing but a gaping grave, and an eternal judgment.

The accomplished gentleman from Alabama, (Rev. Mr. HILLIARD,) might, with peculiar propriety, do what with profane lips I dare not; go to his illustrious friend, and with fervid piety and eloquence more thrilling than that which made Felix tremble, implore him by a love deeper than that of birth place, of nurture, and of residence, by the love of his own immortal soul, to be warned in time by the awful, the inexorable doom—"Accursed is the man stealer." He might, perhaps, have pointed him to the gloomy journey that leads through the dark shadow, and shown him how ineffably brighter are the glories of that Kingdom where all are free. Perchance too, he would have noticed the thronging thousands traveling to that same dread tribunal, summoned to give evidence of deeds done in the body; some of them were bold men and slaves on earth, but whose disembodied spirits were then disenthralled, erect, tall as the proudest of earth's oppressors; and asked him to enquire of his own conscience, who was most likely to meet a hearty welcome there—he, whose cause was advocated by the supplicating voice of thousands with whom he had dealt justly on earth, and made free indeed, or he whose admission should be withstood by myriads of crushed and lacerated souls, showing their chains, their stripes and their wounds to their Father, and to his Father; to their God, and to his Judge.

For the Journal. American Aristocracy.

It must be distinctly borne in mind that we are now arguing the affirmative of our original proposition; that we are examining the facts and circumstances, on which those who practice the principles of aristocracy, build their system. And if in such examination we fail to prove satisfactorily to the minds of all, that the elements of aristocracy exist in this country, no blame should attach to us. For we never alleged that we would prove its existence beyond the least shadow of doubt, independent of every consideration, and in defiance of all that might or can be said or urged against it.

All we can do, positioned as we are, is to take the facts and circumstances of the case as they exist, and if they do not appear within themselves sufficiently strong to produce the conviction of the truth of the affirmative, the fault must certainly lie in the system itself. If it devolved on us to prove incontrovertibly the existence of the system, and we did so, on sound and logical principles, would it not be considered great absurdity and presumption in us, to endeavor afterwards to show that it does not exist, which is the negative of our original proposition? It is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be." Such a mode of reasoning would remind us of a propo-

sition of a certain distinguished Philologist, who undertook, on one occasion, to prove that the faculty of memory has no locality, and yet exists everywhere. Just as if anything can be conceived existing, whether material or immaterial, without position.

We stated in our last, that aristocracy is the practical development of feelings excited in the mind by the influence of a combination of external circumstances, or even a single external circumstance. Indeed it can originate in no other way if it exists at all. For no man in his senses, who has at all examined the principles of the human mind, will argue that the elements of aristocracy are innate, whether practised in this, or in foreign lands, under any form of government; unless he find proof that mankind are not born equal. Man indeed has the mental capacity, and by the perversion and distortion of his passions and faculties, he forms and reduces such principles to practice; but that does not argue they are innate. But it may be alleged that there is no such thing as aristocracy, and therefore no necessity for the evidence of such a position, until at least after it is shown to exist.

Now, in answer to this we say, as it is universally admitted there is in other countries, under different forms of government; and men are of like passions and feelings, and liable to be influenced in their views by similar circumstances, there can be no reasonable doubt of the possibility of its existence among us. The theory of our government is certainly not of an aristocratical nature; nor is the tendency of the majority of our popular institutions; but because these are facts, it does not follow the principles of aristocracy cannot exist here. These may have, and I have no doubt of it, a destructive influence, and still may never be able to effect anything very serious or detrimental, because the opposite influence will ever preponderate, and will to a great extent counteract the other. And we think a reference to a single circumstance of every day life and observation, will satisfy the mind of any honest and candid man of its existence among us. We had thought that a truth so self evident as this, would not require any proof among us; that it was already too plain to admit of any measure of reasoning or demonstration to make it plain. We indeed regard it in the light of a geometrical axiom—something unsubjective of proof, bearing within itself the evidence of its own existence.

Now I suppose that no one will have the hardihood to deny that society generally is divided into classes. (For if this be denied, I can only refer each one to his own observation and experience.) All, we think, who possess the organ of vision are composed of the same material, but often vary in the intensity of the particular sensations, and causes often great embarrassment. It is a truth of which every American ought to be ashamed, and mourn on account of its leprous influence. Why it is known that there are not less than five or six classes of persons even in our little town, which have scarcely any sociability or intercourse with each other. And all these different classes are composed of the same material, and are equally virtuous, and equally industrious citizens. We all know there is a great want of social intercourse among the people of this place. It cannot be denied. It is too evident, and we all ought to feel the force of this truth; and it is said it must be principally attributed to aristocratic feelings and views entertained by many of the citizens. Well now if this classification exists, what is the cause of this want of social intercourse? Are there more degrees of respectability among us? Why are there more classes known than the Scriptures recognize? To what can this state of things be attributed? To nothing else most certainly than to a feeling of superiority—a disposition to regard others your inferiors. To the grand dominant principle of aristocracy. The same principles which were considered aristocratic in governments of that nature, are considered so among us, and their consequences have been exactly similar. It was publicly proclaimed the other day in the Hall of Congress by a distinguished member from Pennsylvania, that the slave holding system is an aristocratical institution. He urged this as a truth from the nature of the system itself. The principles of aristocracy are the same wherever found and practiced. Now, if his position is correct, then certainly aristocracy does exist in America. And he is authoritatively called to double, for he is an individual of very extensive attainments, profound research, and looks at, and takes things as they really are. There must appear evident to every candid mind that the principles of aristocracy are developed and practiced among us. We stated in our last paper one circumstance which tended to give rise to these elements. Another is the possession of wealth, regardless of the manner and means by which it is attained. This immediately creates in the mind the idea of superiority, and forms a strong disposition to regard those who are not similarly situated, as inferiors. As a man increases in opulence his notion of superiority increases, and his respect and powerful influence in all his actions. This we give as a general rule, but there are some noble exceptions to it. And if the possession of wealth has this tendency, and those who are in opulent circumstances imbibed it, and use it to their own advantage, who ought to complain? They have a right to draw a line of separation. Its tendency is to purge from contemplations of law, the principles of aristocracy, to excite notions of superiority, and form the opinion of the justness of classification; but we refrain at present.

Now it seems to me that the individual who is totally insensible to the facts to which I have alluded for the purpose of showing that the principles of aristocracy exist, and are practiced among us, looks only at the surface of things, and has a very imperfect knowledge of human nature, and this may answer for the affirmative.

Thirty-four miles of the railroad running from Indianapolis eastward, towards Bellefontaine, to connect with the Ohio and Pennsylvania Railroad, will be completed, it is said, and brought into use this year.

The Hon. Harwar Denny, has granted to the Pennsylvania Railroad Company a free right of way through his Springfield farm, about a mile from Pittsburgh.